

Statement of Rep. Linder (R-GA)
Resolution Designating May as National Foster Care Month (H.Res.1339)
May 19, 2010

Mr./Madame Speaker, I yield myself as much time as I may consume.

This resolution is one that, in a perfect world, would not be necessary. In that perfect world, every child would live with two married parents, and every parent would unfailingly love and care for every child. But even as we promote the best environment for raising children, we know that's sadly not how the world always works.

So institutions are needed to ensure that, when biological parents don't adequately care for their children, other responsible adults step in. That's the role played by our Nation's foster care system, and most importantly the thousands of foster parents who make foster care work to protect children. Every day foster parents care for about 500,000 children across America who cannot safely remain with their own parents. For that, as this resolution expresses, our Nation says "thank you."

While we celebrate those who make personal sacrifices to protect and care for children, we must also admit that this system doesn't always work as it should. Just like not every biological parent is up to the task, not every foster parent or caseworker meets expectations, either. Sometimes children are subjected to repeated abuse or worse – from within the very system designed to protect them. The Subcommittee on which I serve has had many hearings on such cases, in which children have met with horrific abuse while under the supposed supervision of the child welfare system. Those hearings serve as sad but important reminders why these systems require constant monitoring to ensure children are adequately and appropriately protected.

One of those ongoing efforts is to better involve relatives in the care of children. This is a promising approach, with bipartisan support, and which recent laws have encouraged. But we won't make the needed progress until the Department of Health and Human Services issues guidance about the "notification of relatives" provisions of Section 103 of the *Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008*. I urge the Department to act without further delay, so relatives can play a greater role in the care of vulnerable children. Doing so during this month of May, which this resolution designates as National Foster Care Month, would be a fitting statement of our common desire to better protect children, and also relieve some of the strains placed on the foster parents and caseworkers today. That is the intent of what Congress passed and the President signed into law, now approaching two years ago.

This resolution reminds all Americans of the role foster parents especially play in helping children who have already missed out on so much in life. These children deserve to make progress like any other child. Through the efforts of tens of thousands of dedicated foster parents, they often do, against great odds. We owe these dedicated individuals our thanks and continued support. I reserve the balance of my time.